

Today's News - Thursday, August 30, 2012

EDITOR'S NOTE: We're taking tomorrow and Monday (U.S. Labor Day) off. We'll be back Tuesday, September 4. Happy Weekend!

- Prix minces no words about what he calls the "banal" Biennale: "architects are playing on a sinking gondola while, outside in the real world, our leaky trade is sinking into powerlessness and irrelevance."
- Rose x 2 from Venice: he's more optimistic about things: "the big names are starting to look like architecture's 1%" and "there are moments of sheer delight and amazement" + he gives a mixed review to the "filmic fare" on view: sometimes, "mixing design and documentary can be a bad move."
- Rawsthorn raves about Carlo Scarpa on view all over Venice.
- Paul Goldberger receives the 2012 Vincent Scully Prize (heartiest bravos and kudos, say we!).
- Hume ponders whether old Toronto can survive the new: "the question of heritage looms larger, if not taller, than ever" because developers "haven't figured out how to make money without wreaking havoc on the existing streetscape."
- From preservation battle fronts: Kass makes a pitch to preservationists that they're wrong in their efforts to save Goldberg's Prentice Women's Hospital: "don't sacrifice the future to save the past."
- The demise of Neutra's Cyclorama at Gettysburg now "appears imminent."
- Brussat is inspired by a young architect's alternative vision for the now long-vacant Pruitt-Igoe site (of course, the original project's modernism "was a major factor in its failure").
- Rybczynski ruminates on the "style wars" between classicists and modernists that, in truth, "widely misses the mark...It is clients, not competing architects, who are the key to a style's survival."
- Calys has high hopes for a new park to be carved out of "leftover land under elevated roads and off ramps" in San Francisco.
- Badger brings us a slew of the "next generation of DIY urbanism projects" (move over, parklets - make room for the PPPlanter!).
- An amusing Q&A with Leverte: "Who do I admire? Zaha Hadid: for her tenacity, her work - and her girly gossip."
- Grim news for a lot of foreign students at London Met: deportation rather than graduation could be their future.
- Weekend diversions:
- Bentley cheers the "Skyscraper: Art and Architecture against Gravity" exhibition in Chicago that "does not focus on formal beauty...Instead, the show's artists dwell on ideas of memory, isolation, and reinvention."
- A Parisian artist fills Neutra's VDL House with "pieces that encapsulate the architect's vision."
- Capps gives thumbs-up to "Beyond the Parking Lot: The Change and Reassessment of Our Modern Landscape": "Dyed-in-the-wool urbanists may already know the answer to this show's question...but even they might appreciate a demonstration that looks beyond charts and graphs."
- Q&A with Frampton re: "Five North American Architects."
- Welton is taken by a new tome on photographer Balthazar Korab, who "led a charmed life, if an initially difficult one."

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The Banal: Prix takes issue with the state of the Venice Architecture Biennale, saying "architects are playing on a sinking gondola while, outside in the real world, our leaky trade is sinking into powerlessness and irrelevance." By Wolf D. Prix/COOP HIMMELB(L)AU- ArchNewsNow

Starchitects and squatters: Venice Architecture Biennale: Zaha Hadid installed a flashy tower but the mood...has shifted: away from starchitecture towards something quieter, more collaborative and utopian...the big names are starting to look like architecture's 1%...But it is by no means all doom and gloom. There are moments of sheer delight and amazement... By Steve Rose -- Nieto Sobejano; Anupama Kundoo; Norman Foster; Farshid Moussavi; FAT; Toyo Ito; OMA; Urban-Think Tank/Justin McGuirk- Guardian (UK)

Memo to Venice Architecture Biennale: architecture before architect, per favore: As the filmic fare at Ole Scheeren's floating cinema illustrates, mixing design and documentary can be a bad move...[he] is a promising young architect, but the documentary...does him no favours. By Steve Rose- Guardian (UK)

Venice RedisCOVERS Its Glass Treasures: City festival trumpets long-lost Venini archive and an acclaimed Italian designer and architect..."Carlo Scarpa: Venini 1932-1947"... architects flocking to the Biennale can enjoy an impromptu Scarpa exhibition simply by walking around the city... By Alice Rawsthorn- New York Times

National Building Museum Names Paul Goldberger as the 14th Laureate of the Vincent Scully Prize: ...Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic...for his lifetime work of encouraging thoughtful discourse and debate about the importance of design. - National Building Museum (Washington, DC)

Can old Toronto survive the new? ...the question of heritage looms larger, if not taller, than ever...Though developers realize there's money to be made downtown, they haven't figured out how to make it without wreaking havoc on the existing streetscape...the city must start to demand more and learn to say no when necessary. By Christopher Hume- Toronto Star

When it comes to Prentice Women's Hospital, don't sacrifice the future to save the past: In battle over old hospital, the preservationists are wrong...Not every building designed by a famous architect must be saved. By John Kass -- Bertrand Goldberg (1975)- Chicago Tribune

Fight over Gettysburg's Cyclorama building may be near end: ...has pitted fans and practitioners of 20th century architecture against Civil War purists, and landed the National Park Service in federal court. Now the demise of the 50-year-old structure appears imminent. -- Richard Neutra (1962); Recent Past Preservation Network; Dion Neutra- Philadelphia Inquirer

The myth of the Pruitt-Igoe myth: The film was described in many reviews as defending Pruitt-Igoe from the charge of having failed because of its modernist design...[its] failure was much more complicated...archival footage...makes it clear that the modernism of Pruitt-Igoe was a major factor in its failure. The place was unlovable. By David Brussat -- Minoru Yamasaki; Sam Lima [images]- Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

Style Wars: Some classicists have called for a "war" with architectural modernists. While this sounds rousing, I believe it widely misses the mark...It is clients, not competing architects, who are the key to a style's survival...As for that old bugaboo—"educating the public"—it didn't work for the modernists and it is unlikely to work for the classicists. By Witold Rybczynski -- Thom Mayne; Renzo Piano; Peter Bohlin; Moshe Safdie; Bill Rawn; Jack Diamond; Robert A.M. Stern; David Schwarz; Allan Greenberg; Tom Beeby, etc. - WitoldRybczynski.com

Oscar Park: design under the freeway: ...filling in the unused parcels under the elevated Transbay loop...has the potential to tie together disparate parts of the former industrial district...The fact that it does so with leftover land under elevated roads and off ramps, makes this not-so-little stretch of park a welcome addition to South of Market. By George Calys -- CMG Landscape Architects [slide show]- San Francisco Examiner

The Next Generation of DIY Urbanism Projects: So Much Cooler Than Parklets. Just wait til you see the PPPlanter on a street corner near you. By Emily Badger -- Park(ing) Day; Rebar; Gray Area Foundation for the Arts/GAFFTA [images, links]- The Atlantic Cities

Amanda Levete, architect – portrait of the artist: "Who do I admire? Zaha Hadid: for her tenacity, her work – and her girly gossip": Do you suffer for your art? "I do. But I love to suffer, so it's not a problem." -- Jan Kaplicky/Future Systems; Richard Rogers- Guardian (UK)

'Deportation' facing thousands of London Met students: More than 2,000 London Metropolitan University students could be forced to leave the country after the university's right to sponsor international students was revoked...some incoming and current architecture students would be affected... - The Architects' Journal (UK)

Towering Ideas: Chris Bentley looks at the "Skyscraper: Art and Architecture against Gravity" exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago...does not focus on formal beauty...Instead, the show's artists dwell on ideas of memory, isolation, and reinvention...This is a wonderful show... [images]- The Architect's Newspaper

Artist Xavier Veilhan casts Richard Neutra's VDL House in a new light: In his latest attempt at reimagining a space, the Parisian creates 'Architectone' pieces that encapsulate the Austrian architect's vision...will be continuing...in California and elsewhere after his installation closes at VDL House on Sept. 16.- Los Angeles Times

"Beyond the Parking Lot: The Change and Reassessment of Our Modern Landscape": ...nailing down the point that our society, built as it was around the automobile, is beginning to show wear...Dyed-in-the-wool urbanists may already know the answer to this show's question—are parking lots bad?—but even they might appreciate a demonstration that looks beyond charts and graphs [at Artisphere, Arlington, VA] By Kriston Capps - Washington City Paper (Washington, DC)

Oculus Quick Take: Miguel Baltierra Interviews Kenneth Frampton re: "Five North American Architects: An Anthology by Kenneth Frampton" -- Stanley Saitowitz; Brigitte Shim + Howard Sutcliffe; Rick Joy; John + Patricia Patkau; Steven Holl- e-Oculus (AIANY)

Seeing Architecture in a Different Way: Photographer Balthazar Korab has led a charmed life, if an initially difficult one. "His life story is as fascinating as his work," says John Comazzi, who's recently written "Balthazar Korab: Architect of Photography"...[his] work seeks to create a dialog between a structure, its landscape and its environment. By J. Michael Welton- Architects + Artisans



Renzo Piano Building Workshop: The Shard, London, UK

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